

Iron Spitz at Home and the Five Cupboards August 22

What do "желѣзный шпицъ дома" and "five cupboards" have in common?

They're the basis for similar monoalphabetic ciphers.

The principle is very simple: find a phrase that is the size of half the alphabet, then use the remaining letters, and you'll have your cipher.

"Five cupboards" was used by Australia during World War II, and signals sent by that were described as being "encupboarded." (Deciphering them was making them "uncupboarded.")

F I V E C U P B O A R D S
G H J K L M N Q T W X Y Z

Here is an example of how it was used.

2330 27/7/43 frequency 14970 kc/s JNS4 DE FZS3 170 Saigon 62 25 2020
Daltoadaijin Tokio

Became

2330 2707 0149 7000 VPZGTMX YK GSZOIXKE 170 ZWHFTP 62 26 2020
YWHOTWYWHVHP
ОТЕНТ

The phrase "желѣзный шпицъ дома" ("iron spitz at home") comes from pseudonymous author A Bundovets' pamphlet "The Enciphered Letter: A Criticism of the Cipher Systems in Use Among Us," a long polemic about the insecurity of ciphers used by revolutionaries in the Russian empire...especially his fellow members of the General Jewish Labor Bund. (You can find this on the Internet in Russian at <https://marshalfoundation.org/library/digital-archives/enciphered-letter-criticism-cipher-systems-use-among-us>: it is in pre-Revolutionary Russian,

but a translation exists in the Cryptologic History Museum library.) According to Bundovets, this type of cipher was in heavy use among Russian revolutionaries. The example he used was

ЖЕЛѢЗНЫЙ ШПИЦЪ ДОМА
Б В Г І К Р С Т У Ѳ Х Ч Щ Ъ Э Ю Я

It is uncertain whether that example was actually used, but similar systems were used by many different groups over history.